

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The *Jeu de la hache* is, insofar as we can tell, an early 15th-century manuscript by an anonymous Burgundian author. It is a step-by-step guide to the use of the poleaxe for a man at arms in the lists. The author mentions the list at several points in the manuscript, including the introduction, leading us to believe its intent was for tournament use, the duel or both rather than for battlefield use, although that avenue is not specifically excluded.

Et premierement vous qui estes lung des ij champions appelle en champ de batqueuele soit a oultrance ou aultrement soyes attendant ou deffendant sur tout devez sentir en vostre conscience auoir bonne et iuste querelle.

Firstly, you who are one of two champions called to the field of battle, either “à outrance¹” or otherwise, whether appellant or defendant, above all be sure in your conscience that your quarrel is good and just.

Indeed, many techniques are seemingly more lethal than others are and the manuscript often offers a less lethal alternative to techniques described therein. On several occasions, the author tells the reader to push his opponent out of the list – a type of action that would count as a win in some cases in the context of a tournament. Such plays are illustrated in paragraphs [11] and [41], wherein the Player is admonished to push the opponent out of the lists using his *demy-hache* under the arm.

This work is began life as an interpretive translation, attempting to simplify the language by using a common vernacular for the modern reader. It was meant to augment our studies in Fiore de Liberi's system of poleaxe, but we have since realised that it is a wholly different and rich tradition, despite many similarities. It has since morphed into something more, or less, depending on the point of view of the reader. What began as an attempt to rectify what we perceived as errors in Dr. Anglo's translation, which while good, lacks some of the “essence” of what is said, evolved into a translation

¹ À outrance – from the French word “outrer” or “enraged, angered.” A quarrel or duel done in anger, sometimes to the death in the case of a judicial duel.

and attempted interpretation. In order for the reader to get a better feel for the original text, we have made a conscious decision to limit the translation.

“Limiting” the translation means porting grammatical ambiguities to the English version. The original Burgundian has turns of phrase that seem strange to the modern reader and indeed some things seemingly were taken for granted by the author. Rather than try to translate the text by interpreting what we think the author *meant*, we have preferred to carry over what the text *says* and let the reader/practitioner draw their own conclusions as to the writer’s meaning, insofar as the text goes.

Following each paragraph, we make an attempt to interpret the text as we think it should read, or how the techniques should be done - according to ***our understanding***. We hope in so doing that the reader/practitioner will take our work and build upon it.

It was first transcribed from Burgundian into modern French by Les Maitres D’Armes (thanks to Christine Marcoux for her work) and then into the English you see here.

We have also attempted to simplify the actions and group them by intent and action. Counters to previous plays are clearly indicated, and we attempt to delineate the actions according to their flow from one paragraph to the next. We have also included the original text for reference.

It is our hope that this work will serve the reader well and help him on his fascinating journey into the techniques of the poleaxe and more specifically the *Jeu de la Hache*.

Note on the interpretations

Our interpretations of *Le Jeu de la Hache* are very liberal, indeed – they are quite agnostic. There are many instances in the text where the text is ambiguous or where the action can occur from a variety of positions. Rather than list them all, or attempt to decipher which one is best or even which one the author intended, we simply give the one we feel best represents the text in context. For instance, many of the plays from a bind at the *queues* can be done with the bind high or low. In the end, it matters very little, as long as the principles are adhered to and applied.

In the end, the techniques are meant to demonstrate principles, and if the practitioner understands these underlying principles, then the manuscript has done its job. We do not feel it is our mandate to try and decipher the meaning of a 600 year-old manuscript. We will take what the manuscript gives us and make a best effort as to what we *think* it *could* mean, but there are likely several interpretations that also fit the text. Our only hope is that the reader finds this text useful in their practise.

The role of Armour in axe play

The wearing of armour is key to understanding the mechanics of the system as a whole. Holding extended or high guards for any length of time is tiring. Movement, particularly footwork is made more difficult by the wearing of harness, and must be accounted for in the practice of techniques. Arm harness affects plays, since the forearm is used to control the opponent’s poleaxe in certain

circumstances and is definitely a means of countering entries or entering oneself. While contact is likely incidental, it is definitely used and seemingly implied in some techniques.

Stances are more erect and footwork is more conservative in harness. When using other texts in comparison (Talhofter's poleaxe comes to mind) one must be careful in the interpretation of techniques. Wide stances such as shown in the Talhofter's 1467 manuscript are unlikely when using harness, and the wide, almost jumping steps they imply are all but worthless in harness where stability and movement are compromised.

Parts of the Axe

Queue

(pronounced *kew*) Literally, this means the "tail" and refers to the bottom end of the axe's haft, including the butt-spike.

Dague

(pronounced *dag*) Translated literally, this means "dagger." It refers to the top spike of the poleaxe, which often resembles a dagger in appearance. Its function is also largely similar to a dagger as well, being used as a thrusting weapon.

Demi-hache

(pronounced *demi-ash*) The "demy-hache" refers to the middle portion of the axe. The text makes reference to it as the part between the hands on the axe, and it is used variously in the manuscript to parry an incoming blow or to push an opponent out of the list.

Mail

(pronounced *my*) The "mail" is the primary striking element of the axe. It forms the head with the *bec* and the *dague*.

Bec

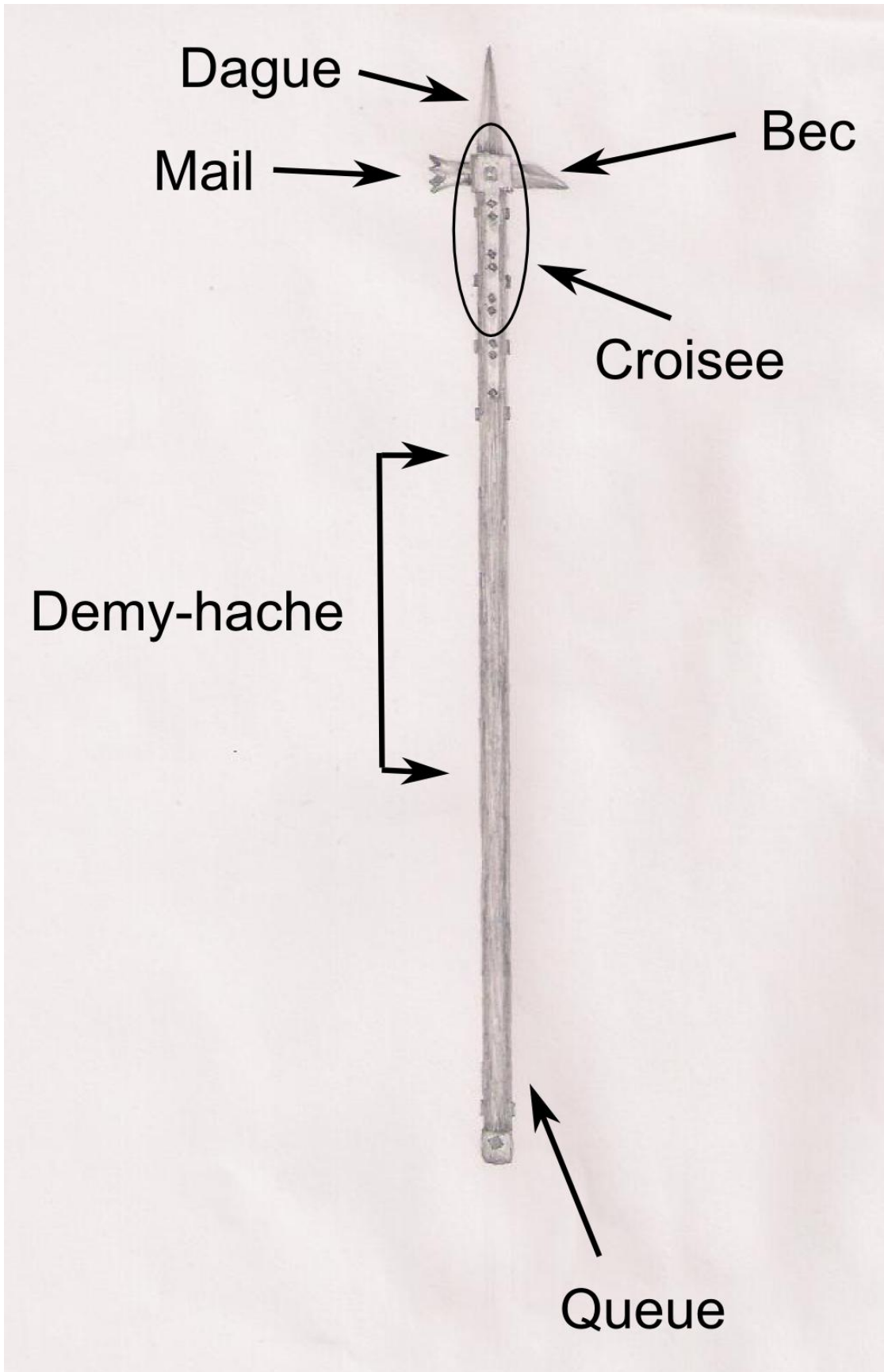
The "*bec*," (pronounced *beck*) or beak, is the back end of the head of the axe. It can be used to pierce the armour, but is more likely used to hook the opponent's armour and limbs, dragging him to the ground where a killing blow can be delivered or the fight ended by the intervening authorities.

Croix

(Pronounced *kraw*) This is the "cross" or head of the axe. It refers to the entire head assembly including the *dague*, *mail* and *bec*. It takes its name from the cruciform shape of the head assembly.

Croisée

(pronounced *crozzay*) The *croisée* refers to the portion just below the axe's *croix*, where the bind often occurs and is more a reference to the action occurring at this point than a name for the part of the axe *per se*. See paragraph [14] for a reference.



Guards

The manuscript does not explicitly describe the guards, but a determination of their respective positions resides in an analysis of the plays of the manuscript combined with experimentation. The author calls for two different guards in the manuscript – the guard of the *queue* and the guard of the *croix*. On one occasion, the author describes a guard named the “*garde de la dague*” or guard of the dagger, which, in context, can only logically represent the same guard as the guard of the *croix*. The author does not denote the height at which the guards are held, but again an analysis of the play in context usually reveals which way the weapon should be held. In some cases, either manner may be acceptable, depending on the action required.

Unlike some poleaxe methods, the *Jeu* does not seem to employ grip switches, but rather maintains hand positions on the haft of the weapon; therefore, the hand near the *croix* always remains the same. This is in stark contrast to both the dei Liberi and Bolognese traditions, but also simplifies the system in many respects as compared to the previously mentioned systems. There is but one notable exception in paragraph [59], where a grip switch is employed to extricate oneself from an otherwise bad situation.

Handedness

Handedness plays a role in the organisation of the manuscript, and there is an entire section at the end dealing with left-handed players. Given the lack of grip-switches in the manuscript, it is our opinion that the author was referencing actual left-handers and not left-handed axe play, although in the end the techniques and principles demonstrated, are effective nonetheless. One of the most noticeable differences of a right versus left-hander is the more frequent occurrence of backhand strikes, or rather strikes against the backhand. Since the Players are in opposite stances, this happens much more frequently, and the perceptive Player can take advantage of this phenomenon.

Guard of the Croix

There are two terms in the manuscript that are apparently interchangeable – the guard of the *croix*, and the guard of the *dague*. In both cases, the evidence indicates they are the same guard. We interpret the guard as being held with the *croix* in front, *dague* directed at the opponent, *queue* held back and low with the right leg forward. This allows for rapid thrusts with the *dague* as well as defensive manoeuvres with the *queue* by bringing it forward and up in a sweeping motion. Try to avoid “lazy” guards, where the axe is rested against the body, but hold the axe slightly out from the body, covering and closing a line as well as being in a state of readiness.

The guard itself is never described explicitly, but all references to the *dague* indicate it being held toward the opponent’s face. Similarly, references to the “*croix*” place it with the *dague* pointed at the opponent. In fact, the guard of the *dague* is referenced but twice, while the guard of the *croix* is never explicitly mentioned. However, the author makes reference to holding the axe with the *croix* or *dague* in front, which we interpret to be the same as being in guard in this instance. There is no evidence for a low guard of the *croix*.

References in the text to one of the variants (*croix* in front, guard of the *dague*, guard of the *croix*, *dague* in front) – paragraphs [4],[6], [13], [17], [18], [23], [24], [25], [28], [60], [64], [68] and an inference in paragraph [65].

Guard of the Queue

This guard is held in an opposite stance to the preceding one, forming its mirror. Assuming a right hand stance, left leg forward, the Player holds the head high and back with the *queue* low and forward. The hands are spaced apart on the axe, one near the shoulder, the other near the waist. This position is well poised for a powerful strike using the head with a passing step while allowing rapid covers with the *queue* of the axe. Some interpretations call for alternate versions of the guard, namely holding the *queue* high with the *croix* low and behind. We dispute this interpretation given the evidence in paragraphs [48] and [49]. In these plays, the author admonishes us not to expose our palms by holding the *queue* higher than the *croix*, inviting a thrust to the palm. This would seem to indicate that the high version of the guard is held more parallel to the ground, rather than diagonally with the head down.

Paragraph [35] discusses a crossing at the *queue*. A crossing at the *queues* is accomplished either with both *queues* low or both *queues* high, in an “X” formation. This position does not seem to constitute a guard in the author’s opinion but rather a position resulting from a bind, and it is deemed acceptable in this situation because the palm of the hand is not a viable target, since the *queue* is not a threat to the palm when crossed. In short, the guard is held either *queue* high or low, but the head is always high. Technically, it meets the requirements for a guard, since it is a position between attacks, however we will defer to the Hache’s author in this matter and stay in keeping with the author’s seeming intention in this regard. Furthermore, experimentation has shown that the head down version of the cover is inferior in most cases to the head high variant

The author seems to favour the guard of the *queue*, inferring that an opponent is experienced because he assumes this guard (paragraph [19]). In paragraph [65] the author goes so far as to name both guards – that of the *queue* and of the *croix* and tells us explicitly that the former is more advantageous than the latter.

References to the guard of the *queue*, or having the *queue* forward: [5], [7], [9], [12], [19], [53], [70].

High guard of the *queue*: [15], [24], [25] (inferred in the text), [26].

Paragraph [43] details a play in which either the face or the foot is targeted, depending on which form of the guard is adopted, inferring both forms of the guard by the ensuing action.

Grip

The basic grip on the axe for a right-handed combatant is with the right hand near the *croix*, approximately 8 inches down, or just below the hand guard on certain axes. The left hand is held near the center of the haft of the weapon, allowing the *queue* to protrude beyond.

Contrary to Fiore dei Liberi’s poleaxe as well as the *Anonimo*, Talhoffer’s and Kal’s *fechtbuchs*, there are no discernible grip-switches in the manuscript. This means that the grip is fairly constant. The hands

may change relative positions on the haft of the weapon, moving higher or lower, but the lead hand never changes. In fact, apart from the exception in play [59], the only time the reader is advised to let go of the axe is to prevent it from being disarmed by moving it higher on the haft as in paragraph [47].

The manuscript begins by illustrating the plays and principles versus a right-handed player. Following this section, there is a section devoted to fighting a left-handed player. Given this, one could make the argument that grip-switches are therefore implicit in the manuscript. We hold rather that given the language used, specifying a left-hander (*gauchier*) rather than someone playing from the left, that it is meant to illustrate the universality of the system against both right and left-handers.

Strikes

The manuscript describes four types of strikes or attacks: the *tour de bras*, the strike using the *demy hache*, the *arrière main* or backhand and the *estocq*, or thrust.

Tour de Bras

The *tour de bras* can best be described as a “turn of the arms.” It is often aimed at the opponent’s head, although the hands are another likely target. The “turn” likely is a result of the arms changing positions, the rear hand becoming the lead and vice versa resulting in the axe describing a circular motion (akin to Fiore’s turns – a *mezza volta* of the hands, if you will). A passing step usually accompanies this strike, powering the strike from the hips. The haft may also be slid through the hand several inches. This has the benefit of lengthening the range of the strike as well as adding power to the blow, but one should remain diligent not to bring the hands too close together. Sliding the haft too far between the hands will result in a loss of control of the weapon since it acts as a long lever against the person wielding it, allowing the opponent to exploit an opening. In practice, letting the haft slide through the lead hand by about 6-8 inches allows for a considerably stronger strike without losing control of the weapon. This not only allows for a stronger blow, but also lengthens the effective range of the weapon somewhat.

Estoc

The *estocq*, or thrust, can be deployed using either end of the weapon be it the *dague* or the butt. It is done either by jabbing forward with the hands, extending the axe forward (with or without accompanying footwork) or by employing an “*estocq en coulant*.” The latter thrust is essentially a “poolcue” action, whereby the axe slides through the front hand to extend the range of the thrust, again with or without accompanying footwork (depending on range). One should be very careful to retract the axe quickly so that the opponent cannot take advantage of a possible opening.

Fundamental actions

Parry or cover with the queue

This action begins from a low guard of the *queue*. If the strike to be covered is a *tour de bras*, raising the *queue* with or without stepping (as the text or context demands) to cover the head is the general mechanic. Apply a levering motion by using the hand near the *croix* to supply more power, and in fact,

the *queue* of the haft may be slid through the lower hand as a mirror of the *tour de bras* to aid in power generation. As in the strike with the *mail*, some range is gained at the expense of control – be careful to not overextend your strike, the haft then becomes a powerful lever against you. The end position covers the head and has the axe held almost parallel to the ground. This offers excellent cover and is a strong position from which to cover and begin other actions.

Against another strike or cover with the *queue*, it may be more advantageous to seek a “true cross” with the *queue*, depending on the angulation of the incoming strike. In other words, bring the *queue* up while keeping the head lower to form an “X” as discussed in the guard section. Seeing as contact with the *queue* is made, there is no danger of a thrust to the hand or palm (which is specifically warned against in the text). Conversely, experimentation has shown the play to work well using the conventional guard of the *queue*.

Parry with the *croix*

The parry with the *croix* is done much as a *tour de bras*, with the defender advancing and catching the descending strike with his *croisée*. The text actually calls for the Player to not pass, but rather block without stepping, reversing the axe for the follow-up with the *queue*.

Use of the *Demy hache*

The *demy-hache* or “half-axe” (middle of the haft) is used in two ways:

1. To parry/block with.
2. To push the adversary out of the list or to the ground.

The first type of action is almost self-evident. In fact, the manuscript calls for the Player to intercept the opponent’s descending strike between the hands on the haft with arms “well extended.” This breaks the attack before it develops full power, robbing it of its efficacy. Follow-on actions continue from the resultant bind.

The second type of action occurs frequently as a method of either pushing the adversary out of the lists, or putting him to ground with the haft of the weapon as a lever. This usually happens with the haft under the armpit (ouch), or to throw the opponent to the ground using a type of key to force his surrender, strike him from a weakened position, or in the case of many tournaments, win the engagement since victory conditions often involved stopping bouts when one hit the ground.

Finally, the *demy-hache* can be bound either *croix* or *queue* forward, depending on stance.

Arrière Main

This is one of the most difficult actions to interpret correctly, since it is contextual. It does not always mean the same precise action. It can mean one of two things, depending on context:

1. Make a backhand strike to the opponent *or*
2. Strike to the opponent’s backhand.

The first is done by striking backhand either *croix* or *queue* forward. This has the disadvantage of being weak, since you are striking towards the open portion of the hand. References in paragraphs [23], [24], [35],

The second takes advantage of the aforementioned weakness, and uses it to try to strike the axe out of the Player's hand. This is seen in paragraphs [19], [24], [35]

Note that paragraphs [24], [35] fall into both categories, since they involve a backhand strike against the opponent's backhand.

Both actions are described in the text, and they will be noted in the translation.

Footwork & stance

Footwork is largely passing footwork, allowing for powerful blows. Some covers however are explicitly described as being done with an advancing step. Retreating occurs mostly using a reverse pass as well, as is described in paragraph [6]. Some steps seemingly cross the centerline, passing to the Player's left and toward the opponent as is detailed in paragraph [9]. This is reminiscent of Fiore dei Liber's *mezza volta* in the *Flos Duellatorum*.

Other actions

Bonne secousse : this is an action that is described in the translation as being a « swift jerk .» It could be variously translated as “good shake” or something to that effect. It is used to describe an action that is meant to unbalance the opponent and throw him to the ground or as an action that is used to make the opponent drop his axe, “shaking” it loose. See paragraphs [11], [23], [26], and [28].

Bouter, deboutter: is used to describe the act of striking with the flat or haft of the axe to unbalance, throw or stun the opponent or as a method for setting aside the opponent's axe with a strike. It occurs in paragraphs [14], [17], [26], [35], [37], [38], [41], [44], [45], [50], [58], [64] and [68].

Principles

Near the end of the manuscript, the author gives us some advice interspersed with the plays. Some of these are:

The importance of controlled strikes that do not leave the Player uncovered, but remain online.
This is seen in paragraph [xxx]

Keep the queue lower than the *daguer*

Parry, wind

Use the queue for parrying

Structure and organisation of the manuscript

The manuscript is structured in such a manner as to group similar plays. In fact, it begins with plays that cover against a *tour de bras*, then show how to defend against a thrust from the *croix*, then against the *queue* and so on. Following this are various plays that would not fit in any other section. The manuscript is also divided into plays versus right-handers and plays versus left-handers. This “left-handed” section of the manuscript follows the same general logical scheme as does the first portion. It is meant to show that the principles apply regardless of handedness, but also illustrates a few unique plays versus left-handers.

A great deal of time and effort obviously went into the manuscript’s organisation, and it follows a teaching protocol similar to other known manuscripts. It follows in a “if he does this, do this” pedagogy, illustrative of a teaching method not unfamiliar even today. The author goes to great pains to group the techniques, followed by the counters, and the counter to the counter. If there are more counters to the original play, he returns then to it and the sequence continues. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule – they will be noted where necessary.

I will let the reader speculate as to what all this means historically, and in terms of the author’s provenance or status. What is obvious, however, is the simplicity of the method as well as the ingenious organisation that is in itself a memory aid to the techniques.

The manuscript

Side-by side translation with interpretation

Here is the doctrine and the method of the noble axe play and the manner of fighting with the axe.

Covers against the Tour de bras

Covers with the queue

Paragraph [4]

Item quant on vous donra de tour de bras droittier a droittier. se vous auez la croix au deuant vous pouez marchier auant du pie gauche en luy receuant son coup en cueillant de la queue de la hache dune venue ferez contre bas pour la luy faire cheoir a terre. Et de la pouez en marchant lung pie apres lautre en suyuant luy baillier destocq de ladicte queue en coulant par la main gauche au visage. ou la ou bon vous samblera. ou luy baillier a tour de bras sur la teste.

Item. When one would give you a tour de bras right-hander to right-hander. If you have the croix in front, you may step forward with the left foot while receiving his blow collecting it with the queue of the axe and at once put it to the ground such that you make his collapse to ground. And from there you can while stepping one foot after another while following strike with a thrust of said queue by running through the left hand to the face. Or wherever you see fit. Or strike him a tour de bras to the head.

Interpretation:

This play begins with the Player in the guard of the *croix* and the Opponent in the guard of the *queue*, preparing a blow with the head of the axe. It is a counter to an opponent's *tour de bras*. If you have your right foot forward with the *croix* before you and the opponent strikes a blow from his right side, pass with the left foot and cover, receiving his blow with the *queue* of your axe and subsequently putting his axe to the ground. Follow-up using a thrust with the butt-spike, sliding the axe through your left hand to his face (or elsewhere, as you choose) while advancing one foot after another. Alternatively, strike him on the head with the head of the axe.

This play begins with the Player in the *croix* guard and the Opponent in the guard of the *queue*, preparing a blow with the head of the axe.

Paragraph [5]

Item se vous auez la queue deuant le pouez pareillement faire sans vous bougier.

Item. If you have the queue in front you can do likewise without moving.

Interpretation:

If you have your left foot forward in the guard of the *queue*, you may do the same play as above without stepping. This play assumes a different beginning stance for the Player – he is in a guard of the *queue*.

Paragraphe [6]

Item encore se vous auez la croix deuant comme dessus pouez receuoir ledict coup de la queue de la vostre en desmarchant en arriere. de toutes les trois couuertes pouez donner lesdicts coups de tours de bras et de lestocq de la queue.

Item. Again if you have the *croix* in front as above you may receive said blow with the *queue* of yours while stepping back. From all three covers you may give the said *tour de bras* and the thrust with the *queue*.

Interpretation:

From the *garde de la croix*, you can receive the opponent's *tour de bras* using the *queue* of your axe while taking a retreating step. The author tells us that all the covers seen to date can be followed up with the same counterattacks – be it a *tour de bras* or an *estocq* with the butt-spike by slipping it through the left hand.

Cover with the Croix

Paragraph [7]

Item vne aultre couuerte de tour de bras, se vous auez la queue deuant sans vous bougier ne desmarchier. Ruez au deuant de sa hache de la croix de la vostre pour la trouuer en croisee seulement quil puisse soustenir le coup quil ne dessende sur vous. Et Incontinent la croisee faite destornez vostre hache en luy ruant de la queue de bas en hault en fauchant entre sa main et la croix de la sienne grant coup pour la luy faire cheoir hors de sa main. Et se faillies que soyes prestement retourne en vostre garde. Et se vous la luy auez fait saillir de la main vous pouez faire ce que bon vous samblera de tour de bras ou aultrement.

Item. Another cover of a *tour de bras*, if you have the *queue* in front without moving nor retreating. Rush before his axe with the *croix* of yours to find it crossed only such that it can sustain the blow so that it does not descend on you. And immediately the crossing made divert your axe by striking with the *queue* upwards between his hand and the *croix* of his with a swipe to make it fall out of his hand. Failing this be quick to return to your guard. And if you have made it fly from his hand you may do as you would with a *tour de bras* or otherwise.

Interpretation:

This play is another cover versus a *tour de bras* with the head of the axe. If you have your left foot forward with the *queue* of the axe before you (in a low guard of the *queue*), without stepping forward or back, cover the blow by crossing it with the head such that it does not strike you. From the bind, immediately strike upwards between the opponent's right hand and the head of his axe with the *queue* of your axe such that he drops it. Failing this, the author advises us to return swiftly on guard. If you succeed in making him drop his axe, strike him as you would.

Paragraph [8] Counter to [7]

Item se vous luy ruez le premier de tour de bras et quil se queure de la fasson dessusdicte vous pouez faire pareillement de la queue comme du sien dessusdict.

Item. If you are first to strike with a *tour de bras* and he counters with the *queue*¹ as described above, you may do likewise with the *queue* as is described above.

Interpretation:

From the bind at the *croix* described in paragraph 7, you may reverse your axe to strike between the head of your opponent's axe and his right hand as is described in the previous play. This play is one

demonstrating the importance of initiative – what the opponent can do from the bind, so can the Player. The Player who is the quickest wins the initiative and can make the play as described.

Covers with the Demy hache

Paragraph [9]

Item se de rechief venoit a vous du tour de bras et que ayes la queue deuant deuez marchier a lencontre du coup le coste droit de vostre homme et de la recevoir de demye hache son coup. et tout d'une venue le plus pres que pourrez deuez marchier de lautre pie gauche et lassoier darriere son tallon bien ferme en luy sourdant sa hache qui est dessus la vostre. et mettre la queue de la vostre soubz son menton et de la donner une secousse en darriere pour le ruer par terre.

Item. If once again he comes to you with a tour de bras and have the queue in front, should step against the blow to the right of your man and from there receive with the demy hache his blow. And at once as close as possible step with the other left foot placing it firmly behind his heel while striking his axe which is above yours. Place the queue of yours beneath his chin and from there give him a swift jerk backwards to throw him to the ground.

Interpretation:

If a *tour de bras* is delivered to you and you stand in a guard of the *queue*, step with a pass to your opponent's right and receive the blow at the *demy hache* between your hands. Follow by stepping with your left foot behind his right heel while you lift the *queue* of the axe over the opponent's head to place it under his chin, forcefully displacing his axe as you do so. With a swift jerk, throw him backward over your leg and to the ground. This play will also work from the guard of the *croix*, adjusting footwork as necessary.

Paragraph [10] Follow-up to [9]:

Item se vous faillies vous deuez retourner sur vostre garde. et cela se doit faire prestement.

Item. If you fail, you should return to your guard. And this must be done swiftly.

Interpretation:

If you fail in the above play, return immediately on guard.

Paragraph [11] Counter to [9]:

Item sil vous faisoit ceste entree dessusdicte. vous deuez mettre prestement la dague de vostre hache soubz son esselle pour lesloignier de vous ou repasser la croisee de vostre dicte hache par soubz son bras pour le pousser de dessoubz lesselle de la demy hache en le suyuant pour le mettre hors de la lisse. ou donner bonne secousse de la force de vos bras seullement pour sentir se le pourrez getter par terre.

Item. If he does the aforementioned entry to you. you should swiftly put the dague of your axe beneath his armpit to push him away from you or replace the croisee of your axe beneath his arm to push him from under the armpit with the demy-hache while following him to put him out of the lists. Or give him a swift jerk with the strength of your arms to feel if you can throw him to the ground.

Interpretation:

If he attempts to enter in the manner described in the paragraph [9], by attempting to throw you backward using his *queue* under your chin, you must hurriedly put your *dague* under his armpit. Use this to push him away from you. Alternatively (if your thrust misses), pass the head of your axe beneath his arm and push him out of the list with your *demy hache* beneath his armpit, keeping the *queue* of your axe low to cover the opponent's axe. Alternatively, push him using only the strength of your arms to see if you can throw him to the ground.

Paragraph [12]

Item aultre couuerte de tours de bras, vous estant sur la garde de la queue sans vous bougier pouez recevoir demy hache tant que vos bras se pourront estendre en hault. Et incontinent le coup receu pouez de la queue de la vostre cueillir la sienne, ainsi quil la vouldra leuer. et tout dune venue la ruer en auant. Et se elle ne vole hors de sa main au mains vous lesbranleuez tellement que aurez temps pour donner coup ou estocq.

Item. Another cover against a tour de bras, you being in the guard of the queue without your moving can receive the blow at the demy hache as much as your arms can extend above. And immediately the blow received you may with your queue collect his as he would raise it. And at once throw it forward. And if it does not fly out of his hand at leastⁱⁱ you will have shaken him such that you will have time to strike or thrust to him.

Interpretation:

This is another defence using the *demy-hache* against a *tour de bras*. From the guard of the *queue* and without stepping, receive his blow on your *demy-hache* with your arms outstretched forward and above your head, such that it covers you. [current interpretation supposes that the author means to collect the opponent's *axe* rather than the *queue* of his axe. The text is ambiguous in this regard, but this interpretation is consistent with the simplicity of the rest of the system. This interpretation of the technique comes from the fact that the author mentions to "ruer devant" meaning to push it forward (the Player's forward, which is always to the strong side). Since the Opponent presents his backhand, you can easily make it fly from his hands with a strike.] Immediately strike his axe using your *queue* in an attempt to make it fly from his hand. Whether or not you succeed in this manoeuvre, he should be sufficiently shaken for you to strike or thrust as you would.

[old interpretation: From this position, immediately move your *queue* forward to collect the opponent's *queue* below his left hand. Lift it up with a winding motion as high as it will go, then give it a swift jerk to the left to make the axe leave the opponent's hand. Even if he does not drop his axe, he will be so confused as to let you strike him at your leisure.]

Defences against thrusts with the Croix

Paragraph [13]

Item se il vient la croix deuant pour vous estocquer. de la queue de la vostre luy devez destourner la sienne le plus souuent que pourrez. Et se la pouez tellement destourner que le puissez veoir descouuert entre luy et sa hache pouez ruer lestocq de la queue au visage. Et ce coup est bon et seur a poursuiuir car il ne vous en puet mesaduenir, et vous devez approchier de luy joindre vostre bras gauche au sien droit. Et se vous voyes que bon vous soit et que en ayes le loisir pouez laisser couler la queue de la vostre dicte hache soubz son menton ayant vostre pie darriere son talon. et de la essayer a le renuersser.

Item. If he advances with the croix before to thrust. with the queue of yours you should displace his as often as possible. And if you can displace it enough that you see him uncovered, between him and his axe you may throw a thrust using your queue to the face. And this strike is good and sure to pursue because he can do you no misfortune, and you should approach him joining your left arm to his right. And if you are in a good position and you have the opportunity, you may let the queue of your said axe slide beneath his chin and having your foot behind his heel. And from there attempt to topple him.

Interpretation:

This play begins with advice that supposes that the opponent will come to you with a succession of thrusts with the *croix*. After setting aside one of the thrusts successfully, the author advises to step in shoulder to shoulder and attempt a throw using the *queue* as leverage under the chin, but only if the opportunity presents itself.

Paragraph [14] Counter to [13]

Item Il puet deffaire ceste entree en destournant sa croisee de sa hache par soubz la queue de la vostre. et de sa ditte croisee debouter en auant de soy vostre dicte queue. Et en faisant cestedicte deffaite vous puet suyure lung pie chassant lautre pour entrer vous et vostre dicte queue affin de vous estocquer au visage.

Item. He may defeat this entry by diverting the croix of his axe beneath the queue of yours (axe). And with his said croisée set aside from before him your said queue. And in doing this counter he can follow you one foot chasing the other to thrust to your face

Interpretation:

If he finds himself with your *queue* in his face, he may counter by slipping his *croisée* beneath your *queue* to the other side. From this position, he may press the attack by thrusting to your face while stepping forward using chasing steps.

Paragraph [15] Counter to [14]:

Item sil vous fait ladicte poursuite nauez que a vous retraire lung pie apres lautre ung pas en arriere et retirer aussy en coulant par la main gauche vostre hache a vous. Et en ce faisant vous vous trouuens despechie et dauantage serez sur la garde de vostre dicte queue.

Item. If he does the said pursuit you have but to retreat one foot after another one step backward and bring your axe back to you, sliding it through your left hand. In so doing you will find yourself the swifter and in the guard of the said queue.

Interpretation:

If he chases you, thrusting as the text mentions, you have but to step back, returning to the guard of the *queue* by sliding the *queue* through your left hand as you step.

Bind at the Croix

Paragraph [16]

Item se vos haches sont iointes lune croix contre lautre et que il vous boutte pour vous reculler pouez desmarchier seullement du pie deuant a demy pour retirer vostre hache a vous. Et incontinent mettre la dague de la vostre entre son becq de faulcon et sa main le plus pres de la croix que pourrez du coste deuers son bras droit en luy bouttant sa hache daultre coste en suyuant pouez marchier du pie gauche vers son darriere en le bouttant de demy hache contre ses espaulles et le ruer par terre.

If your axes are joined one croix against another and he shoves such that you retreat you can step back with only the forward foot a half-step to bring your axe to you. Immediately put the dague of yours between his bec de fauconⁱⁱⁱ and his hand as close to the croix as possible such that you can against the backhand of his right arm strike his axe aside and while following with your left foot towards his rear strike him with your demy-hache against his shoulders to throw him to ground.

If you are in a bind at the croix and your adversary attempts to push against you to make you fall - bring your axe back towards you while taking a half-step back, disengaging from the bind as you do so. Immediately slip your dague to the opposite side of his axe between the croix and his hand, using your croix to bind his axe head. Bear his axe to the ground by reversing your axe, trapping his head with your croix, and bring your queue around with a passing step towards his rear to push against his shoulders with your half-staff, throwing him forward.

Defense against Thrust with the Dague

Paragraph [17]

Item plus se il vient a vous la dague de sa hache deuant pour vous baillier de lestocq et que vous ayes vostre hache pareillement avec la sienne, quant le verrez venir a vous pouez marchier sur son darriere le plus que pourres affin quil ne treuee rien deuant luy. en faisant ceste desmarche deuez boutter du plat de la queue de vostre hache sur son col pour le faire tresbuchier en auant. Et se faillies tournez prestement sur la garde de vostre hache.

If he comes to you the dague of his axe before him to strike you with a thrust and you have your axe likewise, when you will see him come to you walk to his rear as much as you can so that he finds nothing before him. In doing this step you should strike him with the flat of your queue against his collar to make him stumble forward. If this fails return quickly on guard with your axe.

You are both in the guard of the *croix*. If the opponent comes to you with a thrust using the *dague*, immediately step (void) forward and left so that he has no target, and strike him using the *queue* of your axe to his neck, making him lose his balance forward. Failing this, return swiftly on guard.

Paragraph [18]

Item se il vous vouloit donner de la dague de sa hache au visage en coulant devez de la queue de la vostre destourner le coup rudement pour essayer se la pourrez faire cheoir.

If he wants to give you a dague to the face by slipping the axe you should with the queue of yours forcefully set aside his strike to try to make it fall to ground.

If he comes to you with a thrust to your face, sliding his dague through the lead hand, forcefully set aside his thrust using the queue of your axe in a manner that will make the axe go to ground.

This play would seem to indicate beginning in the guard of the queue. The text would seem to indicate a left-to-right movement for the parry (really more a low to high movement), since the authour does not indicate that a backhand strike is used, as is elsewhere described explicitly in the text. The text is somewhat ambiguous as to whom is sliding the axe through his hands – the Player or the Opponent. We take it to mean the Opponent, since setting aside a thrust with a pool-cue motion is counter to the principles of the manuscript thus far. Using the queue in this manner increases the leverage the Opponent has on your axe, thus making it more difficult to parry the incoming blow.

Defences against the queue

Paragraph [19]

Item se il est joueur de la hache et qu'il viengne la queue de sa hache deuant devez essayer se de la dague de la vostre luy pourries de coup darriere main faire perdre la sienne dune main. Et se le pouez faire vous pouez deschergier sur luy telz coups que vous samblera.

If he is an axe player^{iv} and he advances with the queue of his axe before him you should try if with the dague of yours you can with a backhand blow make him lose his grip with one hand. And if you can do this you can discharge upon him what blows you would.

If your adversary is a practiced opponent, he will come to you in a guard of the queue. You should, using your dague against his backhand attempt to make him lose his grip on the queue of his axe. From there, you may strike him at your leisure.

This play begins with the Player in a guard of the queue. It also supposes the Opponent is in a high guard of the queue, since you would not be able to strike his queue otherwise. Simply use a tour de bras to strike against the opponent's queue to make it fly from his hand.

Paragraph [20] – counter to [19]

Item se vous faillies vous devez essayer a luy donner de lestocq de la queue au visage pour luy faire hausser la queue de la sienne. Et se vous la pouez trouuer croisee contre la vostre vous pouez retirer la queue de la vostre en luy baillant du mail contre le coste la sienne. ou en marchant en darriere luy en baillier sur la teste.

If you fail you should try to give him a thrust with the queue to the face to make him lift the queue of his. And if you can find it crossed against yours you can withdraw the queue of yours while striking him with the mail against the side of his. Or while stepping behind him strike on the head.

If you fail in the above action, thrust to his face with your queue so that he raises his queue. You will find yourself in a bind of the queues. Withdraw your axe and strike him with the head of your axe (switch ends of the axe). Alternatively, step forward behind him and strike him on the head.

Paragraph [21] Counter to [20]

Item se il vous vouloit faire devez baisser la queue de la vostre en desmarchant en arriere du pie gauche en vous courant demy hache ou du mail. et puis tourner sur la garde du quel bout que bon vous samblera.

If he would do you as before you should lower the queue of yours while stepping back with the left foot while covering yourself with the demy-hache or with the mail. And return to the guard from whatever end suits you.

Against the play that precedes, you must retreat while covering your head with either the *demy-hache* or with the *croix*. Return to guard.

Paragraph [22]

Item en quelque garde que ce soit vous pouez essayer a luy donner sur la teste. non pas que se vous faillies que vostre hache passast oultre. car il y auroit peril. Et incontinent ce coup fait devez faire samblant de retourner sur la teste affin quil se queuure hault, et a dont luy pouez donner sur le genoul du becq de faulcon. Et se vostre becq de faulcon passe lescreuisse de son genoil devez tirer a vous pour le ruer par terre. Et se il desmarche que vous ne trouuez rien gardez que vostre hache ne passe plus avant que vostre homme, et pareillement en tous vos coups de tour de bras et prestement tournez en vostre garde.

In whatever guard you are you can try to give to him on the head. Not such that if you fail that your axe passes by. because there would be peril.^v And immediately the blow done, you should feint a return to the head such that he tails high^{vi}, and you will to the knee give him your bec. And if your bec passes the crevasse^{vii} of his knee you should pull to you to throw him to ground. And if he retreats such that you find nothing guard that your axe does not pass further forward than your man, and similarly for all the tour de bras and quickly return to your guard.

Make a tour de bras. Do not let yourself be set aside (beat aside or displaced). Immediately feint another high strike to his head, which will make him parry high with the queue after which you will be able to strike him in the knee with your *bec*. If you miss and your *bec* goes past the crook of his knee, hook it with the *bec* and pull him off balance. If you fail in this action because he removed his lead leg, do not remain uncovered on the left but return to guard. This advice applies to all your tour de bras.

Paragraph [23] Counter to [22]

Item et se on faisoit ledict coup de genoul deuez marchier en auant le costé droit vers vostre homme en luy mettant la queue de vostre hache entre sa hache et vostre genoul, et de la vostre dicte queue deuez essayer a luy errachier de ses mains en donnant darriere main bonne secousse contre la croisée de la sienne. Et se ne pouez de la approchies de luy en suyuant lung pie apres lautre, et luy donnez de lestocq de la dague de la vostre au visage.

And if one does the said knee strike you should step forward to the right side towards your man while putting the queue of your axe between his axe and your knee, and with your said queue should try to tear away it from his hands by giving a backhand shove against the croisée of his. And if you cannot, from there approach him following one foot after another, and give to him thrusts with the dague of yours to the face.

To counter the above play, step forward and move to place your queue between his croix and your knee. From this position, attempt to remove his axe from his hand by giving a good backhand strike. Failing this, move forward towards the opponent and try to thrust to his face with your dague.

Paragraph [24]

Item se il tient sa hache la queue deuant, frapper grant coup de la queue de la vostre arriere main contre la sienne pour la faire saillir hors de la main. Et se ne pouez avecques le coup marchant en auant entre luy et sa hache le pouez frapper de lestocq de la dague au visage.

If he holds his axe queue in front, strike a great blow with the queue of yours backhand against his to make it fly from his hand. And if you cannot with the blow step forward between him and his axe you may strike him with a thrust of the dague to the face.

If he stands in a (high – see following play, the act of lowering into a low guard supposes you are in a high guard to begin) guard of the queue, with a backhand, strike vigorously against his queue with yours in order to make it fly out of his hand. Failing this, move forward between him and his axe and thrust to his face with your dague.

Paragraph [25] counter to [24]

Item se il le vous faisoit deuez baisser la queue de la vostre pres de vos pies et desmarchies en arriere et de demy hache destourner la sienne de deuant vostre visage et demourez en vostre garde sur la dague. Et puis pouez desmarchier et tourner sur la garde de laquelle se bon vous samble et souvent le deuez arguez de ces estocs puis sur le pie puis sur la main et au visage et quil ne treuve point vostre hache au ferme que vous puissiez se non a vostre requeste pour faire aucune entree.

If he does it to you, you should lower the tail of yours near to your feet and step back and with your demy hache set aside his from before your face, and remain in the guard of the dague. And you may retreat and adopt such a guard as you would and often you should thrust to the foot and to the hand and to the face and he should not find your axe still such that but by your request he may not enter.

Counter to the previous – Lower the queue to the ground near your feet and displace his thrust with your half-staff, staying in the guard of the croix. From this dague, use the guard that suits you best. You should thrust often and repeatedly to his face, feet or hands as the situation demands. You should not let him find your axe, so as to prevent him from countering or entering.

Paragraph [26]

Item se Il vient a vous la queue deuant et quil la tienne haulte pouez mettre la queue de la vostre en marchant sur son coste gauche de dessoubz son bras et que la queue passe par soubz la sienne hache entre ses deux mains et tirer vers sa main bonne secousse pour la luy faire perdre dune main. Et de la pouez boutter de demy hache en son coste pour le getter par terre, au moins le ferez vous marchier auant et aurez assez loisir de hausser de tour de bras sur luy.

If he comes to you queue before and he holds it high you can put the queue of yours by stepping to his left side under his arm and so that the queue passes under his between his two hands and pull towards his hand a swift jerk to make him lose it with one hand. And from there you may strike with your demy hache to his side to throw him to ground, at least you will make him step forward and will have enough leisure to raise a tour de bras against him.

The opponent comes to you in the guard of the queue, holding it high. Step right (to his left) while putting your queue under his left arm, between his hands. From here, give a swift jolt while pulling towards his hand to make him drop the queue of his axe. Once this is accomplished, you may strike him with your *demy-hache* in the side to make him go to ground or else you will make him advance, giving you time to strike him with a *tour de bras* with the head.

Paragraph [27] Counter to [26]

Item se Il vous fait ceste mesme chose vous nauez a faire que de lachier a coup la main basse, et de reprendre a coup vostre hache plus hault en desmarchant et tourner sur vostre garde.

If he does this same thing to you, you have but to quickly let go the low hand and quickly regain your axe higher while stepping back and return to your guard.

If he does the above to you, let go of the axe with your left hand, keeping the croix high (to prevent the axe from jamming in the ground), step back and recover the axe in the guard of the croix using a roundabout movement.

Paragraph [28] Counter to [27]

Item se il dessaisoit ceste prinse que luy aurez faite en la maniere dessusdicte et quil fust sur la garde de la dague pouez pareillement mettre la queue de la vostre soubz sa demy hache en marchant visage contre visage et passer vostredite queue par dessus son bras droit et donner bonne secousse pour luy faire perdre le gros bout de sa hache, et de la aurez loisir de donner coup ou estocq.

If he counters the hold that you have done in the aforesaid manner and he is in the guard of the dague you may similarly put the queue of yours beneath his demy-hache while stepping face to face and passing your said queue over his right arm and giving him a good shove to make him lose his grip on the « gros bout » of his axe, and from there you will have leisure to give a strike or thrust.

Counter to the above – if he stands in the guard of the croix, put your queue under his arm (more precisely the wrist) and disarm him with a swift jerk, making him drop the “big end.”

Plays from the Bind demy-hache

Paragraph [29]

Item et se vous venez croiser vos haches a demy a pousser lung lautre faites que en croisant vous ayes la croix de la vostre plus hault que la queue et en poussant tournez vostre bec de faulcon vers sa hache pour la tirer a vous en desmarchant de la force de tous vos bras seullement acrochies ledict becq de faulcon au millieu de sa hache et sera pour luy faire perdre sa hache.

And If you cross your axes at the half to push one against the other make it such that in crossing you have the croix of yours higher than the queue and while pushing turn your bec towards his axe to pull it to you while stepping back with all the strength of your arms only hook the said bec in the middle of his axe to make him lose his axe.

If you are crossed at the demy hache, with both of you applying pressure. Ensure your croix is higher than your queue, and while applying pressure, pull back your axe to use the bec to pull his axe towards you while stepping back in order to make him drop it.

Paragraph [30] – follow-up to [29]

Item se il ne chiet ou ne pert sa hache au mains^{viii} vendra il ung pas apres vous, a dont remarchies au deuant en luy baillant au visage de lestocq et puis tournez en vostre garde.

If he does not drop nor lose his axe at least he will step towards you, therefore return forward while attacking to his face with a thrust and then return to your guard.

If he does not drop his axe, he will at least take a step forwards towards you. Step in and thrust to his face with the *dague*. Return to guard.

[31] Counter to [30]

Item se il vous fait la pareille prinse lachies vostre main de dessoubz et il ne fera rien.

If he does to you the same play release your lower hand and he will do nothing.

Release the lower (left) hand to prevent him from pulling you off balance.

Paragraph [32] Counter to [29]

Item vous la pouez aultrement deffaire en le suyuant en son tirer marchies en auant ainsy quil tirera, et de la pourrez en marchant du pie gauche sur son costé droit getter la queue de la vostre sur son col en le versant comme me dessus est dit en la parade de demy hache.

You can otherwise counter by following in his pulling step forward when he pulls, and from there while stepping with the left foot to his right side throw the queue of yours to his collar while toppling him as is told me above in the parry with the demy hache.

Follow him when he pulls you, stepping towards his right. Put your queue against his neck and throw him to the ground with a swift jolt as described in the play of the parry at the demy-hache.

Paragraph [33] Counter to [32]

Item se il le vous fait ia en sauez vous la deffaire en ladicte parade de demy hache.

If he does it to you, you know how to counter in the said parry at the demy-hache.

Parry using a step back with the *queue* (you end crossed at the queue)

Defense against a thrust to the Foot

Paragraph [34]

Item se il vous donnoit de lestocq de sa queue au pie vous devez leuer vostre pie en luy donnant de vostre queue contre la sienne pour le destourner et faire saillir hors de sa main se pouez. Et fait ou non vous luy pouez donner prestement sans vous bougier du mail de la hache sur la teste et sur les mains a vostre auantage.

If he would thrust you using his queue to the foot you should lift your foot while striking with your queue against his to displace it and make it sally from his hand if possible. And done or not you can give him quickly and without moving the mail to the head and to the hands to your advantage.

Defending a thrust to the foot – remove your foot while displacing his queue with yours. Use the tempo given to strike him on the head or hands, whatever is most advantageous, whether you succeed in your parry or not.

Bind at the queues

Paragraph [35]

Item se vos deux haches sont en croix des ii queues, faites se vous pouez quil hausse la queue de la sienne bien hault et de la pouez baisser le bout de la queue de la vostre en la retirant ung peu coulant par la main tant que la puissez repasser par dessoubz la sienne sans esloignier que le mains que pourrez, et de la frapper darriere main contre la sienne pour essayer se la pourrez faire eschapper de la main au mains la desuoyer par fasson que puissez entrer entre luy et sa hache en marchant sur son coste gauche. Et de la pouez boutter de demy hache sur la coste pour le ruer par terre.

If your two axes are crossed at the two queues, make if you can such that he raises the queue of his well high and from there you can lower the end of the queue of yours by pulling it back slightly “en coulant” through the hand until you can pass back under his without straying as little as possible^x, and from there strike backhand against his to try if you can make it drop from the hand at least ^xdisplace it such that you can enter between him and his axe by stepping to his left side. And from there strike with the demy hache to the side to throw him to ground.

You are crossed at the queues. Make him move his queue high so that you can withdraw your butt to place it on the opposite side of his shaft (at the queue). Strike his queue to make him move to

the side while stepping to your right (his left) so that you may push him using your half-staff in the side. [see play 41]

Paragraph [36] (Counter to [35])

Item pour vous garder quil ne le vous face gardez quil ne treuve vostre hache en croisee au mains^{xi} que la vostre ne soit darriere la sienne et ne la tenez guieres en ung lieu.

To guard so that he does not do it to you guard that he does not find your axe in a cross unless yours is behind his and not hold it scarcely in one place.

To prevent him from doing the above, do not let him move his queue behind yours – do not remain stationary!

Paragraph [37] Counter to [35]

Item se dauenture il le vous faisoit vous vous en poes deffaire en dressant vostre hache pres de vous et passer vostre queue par bas entre vous et luy et de la la sourdre a lencontre de son estommacq et le deboutter de vous.

If by chance he does it to you, you can counter by drawing up your axe near to you and passing your queue from below between you and he and from there strike him against his stomach and push him away from you.

– bring your queue in close to you, passing it under his queue (think winding or durchwechseln) to thrust or strike him in the stomach with your queue.

Paragraph [38] Counter to [35]

Item aultre deffaitte sil le vous faisoit Il vous fault dresser vostre hache loing de vous et de la la hausser encontre son estommacq en vous redressant contre luy et le deboutter de vous.

Another counter if he does it to you you have to draw up your axe far from yourself and from there heave against his stomach by straightening up against him and push him away from you.

Unlike the previous play – move your hands high and wind your queue over his axe and down over his left arm to strike him in the stomach with the butt.

Hooks with the bec (varia)-followup to the cross at the queues.

Paragraph [39]

Item se vous le pouez a coup bien faire en vous tournant pouez getter le beq de faulcon en son col et tirer a vous veoir se le pourrez desroquer.

If you can swiftly, do well by turning you can throw the bec de faucon to his collar and pull to you to see if you can throw him down.

If the opportunity presents itself, hook the opponent's neck with your *bec* and pull towards you.

This play gives very little information as to the beginning positions. We interpret it as being a counter to paragraph [35], where being crossed at the tails, the Player reverses his axe, throwing

the bec to the opponent's neck. This is consistent with the organisation of the manuscript, but one must concede that this play can happen whenever an opportunity arises. Once again, agnosticism at work in our interpretation...

Paragraph [40] Counter to [39]

Item se il le vous fait deuez marchier du pie droit en auant en bouttant demy hache la sienne loing de vous et pouez demourer en vostre garde.

If he does it to you you should step with the right foot in front while striking with the demy hache his far from you and you may remain in your guard.

If he does the above to you, step forward with your right foot and strike him with your demy hache to get it away from you, so as to remain on guard.

Paragraph [41]

Item se de rechief les queues desdictes haches sont croisees deuez pousser de la vostre la sienne en la mettant dessoubz la vostre tant quee vous layes fait baisser si bas que ayes fait passer lesdictes queues sur vostre coste gauche tant que ayes loisir de marchier du pie droit sur son darriere et de la le pouez demy hache pousser contre les espaulles grant coup. Ou sil vous a le darriere tant tourne que puissez auoir le plat des espaulles vous le pouez boutter de ladicte demy hache en le suyuant bien prestement puis sur lung coste puis sur lautre selon que pourrez appercevoir du quel coste il veult retourner contre vous, alors bouttez contre ceste espaulle, et sil veult tourner daultre coste poussez sur lautre sans bougier vostre demy hache de dessus son dos. Et en ce faisant le pouez mettre de dehors la lisse.

If again the queues of said axes are crossed you should push with yours against his while putting his beneath yours until you have lowered it so low that you have passed the said queues to your left side such that you have leisure to step with the right foot to his rear and from there may with demy hache push against his shoulder a great blow. Or if he has his rear so turned that you can see the flats of his shoulders you may strike him with said demy hache while following him swiftly then to one side then to the other according to which way you perceive him wanting to return against you, then strike against this shoulder, and if he wants to turn to the other side push the other side without moving your demy hache from upon his back. And in so doing you can put him out of the list.

If your axes are crossed at the queues, you may push his aside (to the left – this play seems to assume a crossing of the queues on the right) such that your queue is over his. Take then a step forward with the right foot, if you have a chance, and strike his shoulder with your demy hache. If you turn him so much that he is completely turned around, strike him squarely between the shoulders and push him out of the lists, striking first one shoulder then the next according to which side he attempts to go so that he may not turn around. [see play 35]

Paragraph [42] Counter to [41]

Item se Il vous faisoit cestedicte entree. Incontinent que vous lapperceurez desuoyes la vostre sur la sienne et il ne trouuera rien.

If he does the aforesaid entry. Immediately that you perceive him remove yours from his and he will find nothing.

– If he attempts the above-mentioned entry to you, remove your axe so that he finds nothing before him (you are not turned).

Miscellaneous techniques and advice

Paragraph [43]

Item se il vient a vous le visage deuant le pouez estocquer au visage de la queue de vostre hache ou au pie quil na dague de couuerte ou vous pouez tirer plusieurs aultres coups.

If he comes to you face before you can thrust to the face with the queue of your axe or to the foot that has little cover or you can throw several other blows.

If he comes to you uncovered you can thrust him in the face or in the foot that is uncovered using your butt spike. Alternatively, you may strike him using any other strike as you wish.

Paragraph [44] Alternative to [43]

Item se il venoit comme dessusdict le visage deuant vous luy pouez donner dung estocq de la queue au visage affin quil hausse sa hache, et se il la tient loing de luy vous pouez mettre la queue de la vostre par dessoubz sa demy hache droit encontre son col et le boutter. Et se ne trouuez vostre auantage a boutter passez ladicte queue par sus sa teste pour le prendre a lautre coste du col a tirer arriere. Et se faillies que ne le puisses pousser de la tirez en suyuant vos pas en arriere et vous ne trouuez dague dempeschement.

If he comes to you as is said above the face before you can give him a thrust with the queue to the face such that he raises his axe, and if he holds it far from him you can put the queue of yours beneath his demy hache straight against his collar and shove him. And if you find no advantage to shoving pass the said queue over his head to take him from the other side of the collar to pull back. And if you fail that you cannot push him from there pull following your steps back and you will find no hindering.

If he comes to you uncovered as before, thrust to his face. If he parries the thrust with extended arms, bring your queue under his demy hache and thrust to his throat, pushing. Failing this (the opponent parries or otherwise reacts without stepping), withdraw your queue and place it on the other side, behind his neck to throw him forward.

Paragraph [45] Counter to [44]

Item se il vous faisoit ladicte prinse vous pouez boutter a demy hache encontre son col ou son espalle et de le deboutter de vous.

If he does said play to you you can strike with the demy hache against his collar or his shoulder and push him from you.

– If he does the above play to you, step in and pre-empt his thrust under your axe as he pulls it back. Strike him using your demy hache to the shoulder, pushing him back and remaining covered as you do so.

Paragraph [46] Counter to [45]

Item se Il la vous deffaisoit en ceste maniere vous devez obeyr a reculler et en vous recullant devez trauersser ladicte queue de vostre hache par dessus son bras droit en tirant grant secousse pour la luy faire perdre du gros bout.

If he counters it in this manner you should obey to retreat and in moving back you should pass said queue of your axe over his right arm while pulling a great jerk to make him lose it by the big end.

– if he attempts to counter you as above, you should immediately step back, placing your queue against his right arm (under the axe) and while stepping, pull towards you to make him drop his axe. (This is like an armlock using the shaft)

Paragraph [47] Counter to [44]

Item une aultre deffaitte. Incontinent que sa queue sera sur vostre col lachies vostre main gauche et reprenez vostre hache plus hault par dessus la sienne en vous desmarchant en arriere qui est bonne et seure deffaitte.

Another counter. Immediately that his tail is against your collar release your left hand and collect your axe higher over his while stepping back that is good and sure counter.

– As his queue comes to your throat, immediately step back and remove your left hand from your axe, passing it to the other side of his axe to grasp your axe higher on the shaft. In so doing, you displace his axe with your arm while stepping back into guard. This is a good and sure counter.

Paragraph [48]

Item se il tient la queue haulte, vous la devez tenir hault comme luy mais autant hault lung bout comme lautre affin de non monstrier le creux de la main que le mains que vous pouez, et de la vous pouez garder se son estocq sil vous tiroit au visage.

If he holds his queue high, you should hold it high like him but one end as high as the other so as not to show the small of the hand^{xii} as little^{xiii} as you can, and from there you can guard if his thrust it comes to your face.

If he holds his queue high, you should hold your queue as high as he does (no higher!) with both ends at the same height (parallel to ground), not exposing the palms of your hands (to prevent a thrust to the palm). From here, if he thrusts at your face, you can set it aside.

Paragraph [49]

Item se il tenoit la queue de sa hache plus hault que la croix il monstre le creux de sa main dont vous luy pouez donner de lestocq de vostre dicte queue au creux de la main.

If he holds the queue of his axe higher than the croix he shows the small of his hand so you can give of a thrust of your said queue to the small of his hand.

If he comes to you with the queue higher than the croix, he is exposing the palm of his hand – promptly thrust into his palm with your queue.

Paragraph [50]

Item se il vient a vous comme deuant le visage deuers vous pour vous boutter demy hache ou aultrement, se pouez approchier de luy vous pouez mettre la queue de vostre hache entre ses cuisses le plus auant que pourrez et lors leuez le gros bout que tenez en la main de toute vostre puissance pour le sourdre hault et luy se perdre terre.

If he comes to you as before the face ahead to strike you with the demy hache or otherwise, if you can approach him you can put the queue of your hache between his thighs as much forward as you can and thus lift the big end you hold in hand with all your might to lift it high and make him lose ground.

If the opponent comes to you to strike or push you with his demy hache or otherwise, if you can, step in and place your queue between his legs (this supposes he is in a right-leg lead), pulling the queue and pushing the head forward in a levering motion so as to make him lose his balance, threatening to strike him on the head as you do so.

Paragraph [51] Counter to [50]

Item se ainsy le faites force luy est de tumber en arriere, et se il le vous vouloit faire nauze a faire que prestement mettre la demy hache contre son col ou son espaule et cela le gardera de pouoir leuer sy grans fais.

If thusly done, he must fall back, and if to you he would do it you have but to swiftly put the demy hache against his collar or his shoulder and that will keep him from being able to lift as much weight.

– if he tries to throw you in the manner described above, place your demy hache against his throat or shoulder to rob him of his strength (leverage). In so doing, you will prevent him from throwing you while covering the blow for the head.

Here begin the plays of the left-hander versus the right-hander

Defense against a Tour de Bras

Paragraph [52]

Item se le gauchier vient a vous donner de tour de bras deuez desmarchier du pie gauche en auant en ruant la queue de vostre hache au deuant de son coup affin que le coup ne tumber sur vous, et de la couuerte faite prestement deuez retirer la queue a vous en ruant du mail de vostre dicte hache encontre le dos de la sienne pour luy ayder a sen aler avecques son branle dont il vous cuide ferir, ou pour luy faire eschapper du gros bout de sa main.

If the left-hander comes to give you a tour de bras you should retreat the left foot forward while throwing the tail of your axe in front of his blow such that the blow does not fall on you, and from the cover done swiftly you should pull back the queue to you while throwing with the mail of your said axe against the back of his to help him go away with his strike that he thought to strike you with, or to make him drop the big end from his hand.

If the left-hander comes to you with a tour de bras, retreat with the left foot in front and parry with the queue of your axe in front of his blow to prevent it from striking you. Quickly withdraw the queue of your axe and strike the opponent's axe with the head of your own such that it is removed from play or the opponent drops it.

Paragraph [53]

Item se il auoit retire sa hache sy a coup quil vous conuenist faillir retirez vous prestement sur la garde de vostre queue.

If he has pulled back his axe swiftly so that you might fail pull back swiftly to the guard of your queue.

If the opponent withdraws his axe after the parry, return quickly into the guard of the queue.

Paragraph [54]

Item se ledict gauchier vous vient donner de tour de bras en quelque garde que vous soyés desmarchies ung pas en arriere et il ne trouuera rien.

If the said left-hander comes to give of a tour de bras in whichever guard you may be retreat one step back and he will find nothing.

If said left-hander wishes to strike you with a tour de bras, retreat one step back (void) and he will miss.

Initiating a Tours de Bras

Paragraph [55]

Item se vous ruez a tour de bras a vostre gauchier se il se treuve se sa queue en la fasson dessusdicte Incontinent le coup fait donnez de la queue de la vostre contre le darriere de la sienne grant coup pour essayer a la luy se perdre dune main, mais perdre ou non vous pouez avecques ledict coup a tant marchier du pie gauche en auant darriere son talon et luy mettant la queue de la vostre par dessoubz le menton pour le reuersser se pouez, se ne pouez rien faire tourner vous prestement en vostre garde, en vous retirant suyuant vos pas ainsy demourrez sur la garde de vostre queue.

If you throw a tour de bras to your left-hander if he finds his queue in the manner said above immediately the blow made give of the tail of yours against the back of his a great blow to try and make him lose it from one hand, but lose or not you can with the said strike step with the left foot in front behind his heel and putting the queue of yours beneath the chin to topple him if you can, if you can do nothing return swiftly to your guard, while retreating following your steps as such remaining in the guard of your queue.

If you wish to strike the left-hander with a tour de bras, and he parries with the queue of his axe as above (play 52), immediately strike the back of his queue with the queue of your axe to make him drop his axe. Whether or not he loses his grip, step with your left foot behind his heel while placing your queue under his chin to make him go to ground if you can. If you can't do this, retreat and return swiftly to the guard of the queue.

Paragraph [56] Counter to [55]

Item se il vous faisoit cestedicte entree, n'avez a faire que tirer vostredicte queue par dessoubz la sienne et la hausser en la mettant a luy pareillement comme il la a vous auoit mise et en ce faisant deffaites sa prinse.

If he does the said entry, you have but to pull your said queue beneath his and raise it while putting it to him as he put it to you and in so doing counter his play.

If he attempts to enter in the manner described above, simply withdraw your queue as he attempts to strike it, letting it go by. You are now in a position to throw him as he would have done to you in the previous play, left foot behind the heel with the queue of your axe under his chin.

Paragraph [57] Counter to [56]

Item il la puet deffaire quant lauries reffait en la maniere dessusdicte et tant que vous auez la vostre hache soubz son menton auez le bras hault, et de la vous puet mettre a demy hache dessoubz vostre esselle, et vous puet pousser bien fort. Et pareillement la luy pouez faire sil vous faisoit ladicte entree. Et pour ce fait ou failly ny devez dague seiourner.

He can counter when you redo it in the manner aforesaid and as long as you have your axe beneath his chin have the arm high, and from there he can put his demy hache beneath your armpit, and can push you very hard. And likewise can do it to him if he does the said entry. And whether done or failed you should not tarry.

If he attempts to throw you with the queue under your chin, you may place your demy-hache under his armpit and push him. This is done as he attempts to move forward.

Paragraph [58] Counter to [57]

Item et pour deffaire ceste dite bouttee soubz lesselle. Incontinent que la sentirez vous pouez lachier a coup vostre main gauche et mettez vostre bras par entre sa demy hache quil tient loing de luy pour vous boutter et son corps et faites tantost dune venue que luy mettez la main par le fourc et le haussez hault pour le desroquer.

And to counter this said push against the armpit. Immediately that you perceive it you can release swiftly your left hand and place your arm from between his demy-hache that he holds far from him to strike you and his body and make now swiftly that you put a hand by the crotch and raise him high to throw him down.

If he tries to push you under the armpit as before, let go with your left hand and pass it between his demy-hache to grab between his legs and throw him to the ground.

Paragraph [59] Counter to [58]

Item se il le vous faisoit devez a coup lachier la main gauche de la queue de vostre hache et reprendre de ceste main gauche la croix de vostre dicte hache en coulant la main droite contre bas et de la pousser contre son col et il naura pouoir de vous hausser.

If he does it to you you should swiftly release the left hand from the queue of your axe and collect it with this left hand the croix of your said axe while slipping the right hand down and from there push against his collar and he will not have strength enough to raise you.

Grip switch? Seems so...

Paragraph [60]

Item se ledict gauchier vient a vous la dague de sa hache deuant pour estocquer au visage ou en aultre lieu au dessus de la sainture pouez tourner de la queue de la vostre souuent deuant son visage pour luy troubler son avis quil auroit entrepris de fairee quelque coup et de la pouez tirer coup de mail sur la teste de hault en bas ainsy se failliez que vostre hache ne vous emporte tant quil vous conuenist luy tourner le dos qui seroit grant peril.

If the left-hander comes to you dague of his axe in front to thrust to the face or in another place above the belt you can circle with the queue of yours often before his face to trouble his judgement of strikes he would otherwise make and from there throw a strike with the mail on the head from high to low and failing this that your axe does not carry you so much that you turn your back that would be great peril.

The left hander comes to you dague in front. With your queue, trouble him by pointing to his face and then strike him with the mail. Don't let yourself get carried away to turn your back...

Paragraph [61]

Item sil se couuroit de la croisee de la hache pour le premier coup faites samblant de recouurer ung aultre coup affin quil se queueure hault comme deuant pour garder sa teste, de la tirez grant coup par le genoul et bien auant affin que sil desmarchoit que la hache treuue lautre genoul par dedens jambes. Et sil ne desmarchoit deuez tirer grant secousse a vous affin que vostre becq de faulcon sacroche a son genoul pour le ruer par terre. Et se vous pouez ne tirez pas ce coup audessous de lescreuisse, mais en lescreuisse ou au dessus affin que se vous faillez a le desroquer que vous le puissiez desarmey de quelque piece de cuissot.

If he would cover with the croisée of the axe for the first blow feint another blow so that he tails high as before to guard his head, from there throw a great blow by the knee and well before such that if he retreats that the axe finds the other knee by inside the legs. And if he does not retreat you should pull great jerk to you so that your bec de faucon catches his knee to throw him to ground. And if you can do not pull above the crevasse, but in the crevasse or above such that if you fail to throw him that you can disarm him of some part of his cuissot^{xiv}.

Fake high and go low to hook his knee with your bec. Keep yourself covered.

Paragraph [62] Counter to [61]

Item se il le vous faisoit nauez a faire que desmarchier du pie gauche qui est darriere et le mettre deuant lautre pour hurter du genoul le millieu de sa hache pour vous desenferrer.

If he does it to you you have but to step back with the left foot that is behind and place it in front of the other to strike with the knee the middle of his axe to free disengage yourself.

Break the attack of his axe with your left knee.

Paragraph [63] Follow-up to [62]

Item de la le pouez de la queue de vostre hache estocquer au visage qui est bonne deffence. Et pour ce quant ferez ledit coup faites le prestement, et se vous faillez tournez vous a coup en vostre garde.

From there with the queue of your axe thrust to the face which is good defence. And for this when you do said blow do it swiftly, and if you fail return swiftly to your guard.

Step in and thrust with the queue since it's on line.

Defence against the Dague

Paragraph [64]

Item se ledict gauchier vient a vous la dague au deuant de rechief deuez de la queue de la vostre deboutter la croix de la sienne puis sa puis la. Et en ce faisant pouez mettre vostredicte queue contre la croix de la sienne sur le manche par deuers son corps et deuez laisser couler de la main gauche ladicte queue encontre la croix de le sienne tellement que ayes force de la esloignier en arriere main. Et en faisant ceste coulisse droitement deuez marchier de vostre pie droit sur son darriere pres de luy et tout dune venue deuez boutter a demy hache vostre grant bout pour essayer se le boutterez a terre, ou au mains^{xv} se desmarcher il et pouez faire coup.

If the said left-hander comes to you with the dagger before again with the queue of yours strike the cross of his now here now there. And in so doing you can put your said queue against the croix of his on the haft against his body and should let slip with the left hand the said queue against the croix of his so much that you have strength to push away with a backhand. And in doing this slipping rightly you should step with your right foot to his rear near to him and in one movement should strike to demy hache your big end to try and throw him to ground, or at least if he retreats and make a blow.

We did this.

Paragraph [65] Counter to [64]

Item se il le vous faisoit deuez si prestement que vous vous sentez enferre baisser le gros bout de vostre hache en la tournant par dessoubz la queue de la sienne sans guieres la esloignier et tant que vostredicte hache viengne sur la darriere de sa queue. Et de la pouez esbranler tant que aurez loisir de desmarchier en arriere pour tourner en la garde de la queue car elle est plus auantageuse que celle de la dague.

If he does this to you should as soon as you feel yourself thrust to lower the big end of your axe by turning beneath the queue of his without straying far and as long as your said axe comes on the rear of his tail. And from there you can shake him as long as you have leisure to step back to return to the guard of the queue because it is more advantageous than that of the dagger.

We did this.

Bind at the Queues

Paragraph [66]

Item se vos queues sont ioinctes en croix les pouez affermer ensamble affin quil assure la sienne. Et de la deuez desmarchier en arriere de vostre pie gauche, et en desmarchant tirez ung coup du mail en coulant sur ses mains et cest ung bon coup mais que la vostre queue soit darriere la sienne. Et pour vous garder de coup gardez que iamais il nayt la sienne darriere la vostre car se il la deuant il ne le vous puet faire pour la queue de la vostre qui len garde.

If your queues are joined in a cross you can hold firm together such that he ensures his. And from there you should step back with your left foot, and in stepping back throw a blow with the mail while slipping to his hands and it is a good blow but if your queue is behind his. And to guard against this blow take care that never he has his behind yours because if his is in front he can not do it because the queue of yours guards against it.

We did this too.

Paragraph [67]

Item vous pouez tousiours ayant vostre queue darriere la sienne en la debouttant ung peu en auant luy tirer destocq par le visage.

You can always having your queue behind his by striking it away cast a thrust by his face.

When crossed at the queues with your queue behind his, set it aside and thrust to his face.

Paragraph [68]

Item se ledict gauchier vient a vous la dague deuant et quil tiengne sa hache longue vous pouez mettre la queue de la vostre en croisee entre sa main et la + et de la tirer en arriere main contre bas pour la faire

passer sur vostre darriere en marchant du pie droit en auant le pouez boutter demy hache contre ses espauls pour le desroquer.

If said left-hander comes to you with the dague in front and he holds his axe long you can put the tail of yours crossed between his hand and the croix and pull it backhand down to make it pass behind you while stepping with the right foot in front you can strike him demy-hache against his shoulders to throw him down.

If the left hander comes to you with the dague before him and holds his axe long, you can put your queue between his cross and his hand and with a backhand motion pass it behind you with a step forward with the right foot to push him with the demy-hache against his shoulder.

Paragraph [69]

Item gardez que iamais il ne puisse aduenir a appuyer croisee de sa queue contre le deuant de la vostre, ou se dauenture il faisoit prestement quil aura appuye destournez la vostre par sus la sienne et ne le pourra faire.

Guard so that never he can come to press crossed with his queue against the front of yours, or if by chance he does swiftly once he will have pressed divert yours over his and he will be unable to do it.

Precaution – if you are crossed at the queue against him, ensure you are in front of his, and if not, go over his axe to regain position.

Paragraph [70]

Item se vostre homme vient a vous sur la garde de la queue et quil la tienne comme basse pouez frapper de vostre queue contre la sienne auant main pour la esloignier sur son deuant. Et se le pouez faire en suyuant lung pie apres lautre pouez vous mettre entre sa hache et luy et de la devez mettre vostre dicte queue entre ses cuisses iusques a demy et devez subleuer vostre homme sur ladicte queue le plus hault que pourrez. Et pouez faire ceste dicte prinse de plusieurs autres entrees ne plus ne mains comme deuant est mis au Jeu de droittier a droittier.

If your man comes to you in the guard of the queue and he holds it low you can strike with your queue against his forehand to remove it from his front. And if you can do it following one foot after another you can put yourself between his axe and him and from there you should put your said queue between his thighs up to the half and should lift your man on the said queue as high as you can. And you can do the said play from several other entries neither more nor less than is done in the Play of right-hander against right-hander.

If he comes to you with the queue before, set it aside with a forehand with your queue and place your shaft between his legs, levering him up. You can do this also against a right-hander.

Paragraph [71] Counter to [70]

Item se il le vous faisoit devez mettre a demy vostre hache entre sa poitrine et naura pouoir de la faire.

If he does it to you you should put to the middle your axe in his chest and he will be unable to do it.

Did this. Slip out your axe and put it against his chest to counter 70.

Paragraph [72]

Item se vostre homme vient a vous le visage deuant soit droittier ou gauchier se pouez mettre la queue de vostre hache par sus la sienne et en mettre le bout sur lesselle droite le pouez pousser du coste de ladicte queue en le suyuant tousiours sans quil y ait guieres bon remede de se desenserrer et par cela le pouez mettre hors de la lisse.

If your man comes to you with his face before whether right-hander or left-hander if you can put the queue of your axe over his and place the end on his right armpit you will be able with the side of said queue while following always and without his having a good remedy to get free and as such you will put him out of the list.

If he comes to you uncovered, you can pass your axe over his to place it under his right armpit and push while following him to put him out of the list.

Paragraph [73]

Item le devez souuent arguer destocz par le visage et par les pies pour luy faire perdre son aduis.

You should often argue with thrusts to the face and to the feet to make him lose his confidence.

Glossary

ⁱ The original Burgundian reads “*queue*” meaning “tails.” In context, the sentence reads “if you strike to him with a tour de bras and he *tails* in the aforementioned fashion...” We have interpreted this to mean a cover using the *queue*.

ⁱⁱ All the transcriptions I have read to date read “au mains” meaning “to the hands.” Considering the context, this is highly unlikely and is likely a transcription error. The text should more likely read “au moins,” meaning “at least.” The “a” and the “o” have seemingly been confused in the transcription process. This error appears in several instances throughout the manuscript, and it is one of the few areas where we have altered the original with our interpretation of the text.

ⁱⁱⁱ Falcon’s beak

^{iv} *Joueur de hache* translates literally as “player of the axe” or “axe player.” In context, it is used to describe someone experienced at axe-play.

^v This is advice to control your strikes, whatever the beginning guard or attack. Overcommitted strikes will leave the Player uncovered, a perilous thing to do.

^{vi} See note 1.

^{vii} Lescrevisse: The bend behind the knee.

^{viii} See note ii.

^{ix} The sentence structure is odd here. I take this to mean “stray as little as possible.”

^x See note ii.

^{xi} Another instance of the “au mains” rather than “au moins.” We have again chosen the latter interpretation, but in this case, it is more appropriately translated as “unless,” given the context.

^{xii} “Creux de la main” translates better as “palm of the hand” but it’s more akin to “le creux du dos” meaning “the small of the back.” We have chosen to translate it thusly, with the intended meaning being the palm of the hand.

^{xiii} The text reads “le mains” meaning “the hands.” In this context, we feel once again there is a transcription error at work – this is the same error that has plagued us from the beginning. The phrase one again regains its meaning if the word is “le moins” meaning “the least” or “as little.”

^{xiv} Cuisse refers to the upper leg harness, often called a *cuisse*. In this instance, the author advises you to pull off a piece of the opponent’s leg harness.

^{xv} Once again, the “au mains” makes its appearance. We have opted once again to use the translation “at least.”